

AN EXTRACT FROM



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First published in 2006 by Marshall Cavendish Editions and
Cyan Communications Limited

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All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.
Edmund Burke

Chapter 1. What is the Make a Difference Mindset, and why is it important?

WHAT IT IS

“I want to make a difference.” How often do we hear people say that? And how often do we say it ourselves?

Most of us want to make a difference. The trouble is, we aren't too sure how to do it. More importantly, we're not totally clear why we want to make a difference.

We have a feeling that we are here for a purpose, but we're not too sure what that purpose is. We believe we should be doing something about it, but we're not sure what. We feel we want to leave our mark on the world—some trace of our passing—but we're confused as to what sort of mark it might be. So the desire to make a difference exists in a kind of vacuum. We know it's intrinsically worthwhile, but it's still floating around on some wish list, not yet written down or prioritized.

It's our goal to make a difference, but we probably won't get round to it this week.

This book is about two things. First, it is about the Make a Difference Mindset, which is a simple action plan to make us more effective at making a difference in our chosen domain.

Second, and possibly more importantly, it is about how we can discover our purpose. Discovering our purpose will enable us to find where and how we will make a difference, as well as tap into the energy source for our drive and enthusiasm to make it happen.

Through making a difference, we can find fulfillment.

Through discovering, and living, our purpose, we can find freedom.

We can unlock our enthusiasm and passion, because our lives will begin to have meaning. Finding meaning makes it much easier to turn up to work that has become a chore, go home to a challenging family situation, or take on and resolve difficulties in our social life.

One of the benefits of finding our purpose, and having meaning in our lives, is that fulfillment is more achievable than happiness. Happiness is tricky. It comes and goes, and is hard to sustain when things get tough. Things getting tough, however, taken as part of the rich tapestry of life in which we are encountering a difficult patch, can be fulfilling.

So fulfillment is achievable, and more enduring, than happiness. It's not only more achievable; it's more satisfying and worthwhile.

Let's look first at the Mindset.

The Make a Difference Mindset is the deliberate, conscious, decision to make a positive difference. Either to the people around us, or the situation in which we find ourselves. The Mindset defines the move from generalized drift to a voyage with a clear goal. It creates an unshakable inner confidence that we can change things for the better. It confirms our wish to leave a legacy, either in improving the lives of those we are close to, and come into contact with, or in changing the way organizations or societies behave.

And it gives us the energy to do so.

The Make a Difference Mindset moves what is now probably an occasional unconscious competence into a regular conscious competence. Our currently sporadic ability to make a difference becomes less haphazard and random.

Note: the Make a Difference Mindset is complementary to any religious or spiritual faith, understanding, or commitment you may have. It works in conjunction with it, and does not replace it in any way.

DIFFERENCE DRIVERS, DIFFERENCE DELIVERERS, AND BENEFICIAL PRESENCES

The differences we can make tend to polarize into two types. The first is the humanitarian response to suffering in all its forms. The second is the moral response to perceived failures by governmental, non-governmental, or commercial organizations to behave with integrity or compassion, or to respond with energy to the environmental challenges facing our planet. The first would include response to famines in foreign lands, or the homeless on our doorstep. The second includes response to an organization that bullies and manipulates its workers or suppliers, or ignores its responsibilities to the environment.

Making a difference is a very broad church. It involves bringing our humanity to bear in order to positively benefit people, organizations, our society, and future generations. Good things happen which probably wouldn't have happened without the contribution of the individual attempting to make a difference. On an individual level, making a

difference can be as simple as being compassionate to another human being at a time of need.

In essence, it is a desire to improve the lot of our fellow man or woman, to an extent that reflects how ambitious we are, and how effective we are at influencing events or making things happen.

The people who make differences on a societal scale we can call Difference Drivers (often aided by Difference Deliverers), and the people who make personal, often one-to-one, differences we'll call Beneficial Presences.

There are, of course, gradations in between, but the distinction between the three types lies in the focus of purpose and ambition. Difference Drivers intend to make waves, and change paradigms. They intend to make the world a different and a better place. They want to leave a legacy, and they want that legacy to be in the public domain.

The **Difference Drivers** tilt at windmills, and sometimes they knock the windmills over. They find a situation in the organization they work for, the community they are part of, or the society they live in, that jars with their personal values, and they set out to change it.

As we shall see later, some of the great pioneering charities - like Amnesty International and Greenpeace - have been started by an individual, and subsequently a group of individuals (Difference Deliverers), who have been imbued with a sense of purpose that has made them passionate antagonists of the status quo.

Passionate antagonists of the status quo are the chief source of Difference Drivers. They are not always easy people to have around. Even Nelson Mandela, who evolved into a serene Beneficial Presence, was once a Difference Driver, and his weapons were guns and bombs.

Difference Deliverers are the people who consciously set out to make a difference, and do so. Though the individual act or acts can at times seem small, their contribution to the overall impact can be vital. The small acts of the Difference Deliverers can cumulatively make a massive impact. Most of us fit into this category.

This difference can be in supporting Difference Drivers. It is very rarely that social change is accomplished by one person working alone. You can't start a movement for change without having people in that movement.

Sometimes these helpful foot soldiers can be just as brave and committed as the Difference Driver him or herself. Lech Walesa, the visionary leader of the freedom movement in Poland, which was instrumental in the final toppling of Communism in that country and subsequently Eastern Europe, was a shop steward in the shipyards. It took courage for him to stand up and resist an ugly, authoritarian regime, but it took just as much courage for the individual shipyard workers in Gdansk to resist the soldiers and

secret police coercing them back to work. It was these Difference Deliverers who ultimately made the difference.

Most Difference Deliverers, however, operate individually, or in small teams. The differences that they make are important, whether they are on the level of family, job, community, distinct groups in need of succor or support, or on a societal level. The differences they make may only be relatively small, but cumulatively the difference can be huge, and immensely worthwhile.

Beneficial Presences are people who make a difference through living who they are. Their purpose is to love and cherish other human beings, and they gain their meaning from compassion for, or service to, others. They add huge value to other human beings just by making them feel valued. Some are just natural servers, or are naturally compassionate, others have to work at it.

The legacy they leave is usually in the private domain. They are loved by those around them. When they die, their funerals often see mourners turn up in large numbers, most of whom do not know each other, and who had no idea the person they are mourning touched so many lives. They are sometimes revered, but are usually not aware of it. Their reward is in personal fulfillment, not changing the world. On the other hand, some Beneficial Presences have no one at their funeral. This may be because they made a profound difference to someone who suffered prolonged incapacity or illness, to the exclusion of all else. Their hugely generous act of dedicating their life to another human being meant they couldn't touch the lives of other human beings, because all their energies had to be focused on helping just one person. Yet for that one person, whom they helped and nursed, they made a pivotal difference.

The aim of this book is simple. It is to help you decide whether you want to be a Difference Driver, a Difference Deliverer, or a Beneficial Presence, and in what domain in your life you want to start. Once you have decided, it will help you get better at making a difference. You'll get better at it by coming to understand what is often very elusive—your purpose. Having found meaning in what you are setting out to achieve, you will develop some specific techniques which will make you more effective at delivering the difference. The exciting part of your journey will then begin—making it happen.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* describes man's existence as nasty, brutish, and short. He was in fact discussing man's existence in times of war, but the phrase resonates so powerfully today, because it seems at times that we are living in a period of constant war. Not just in the conventional sense, but in the sense of society reeling out of control, with anger and gratuitous violence filling our newspapers and television screens on a daily basis.

The ubiquity of messages indicating near-anarchy in societies around the world, from West to East, makes it all too easy to fall into a slough of despondency. This despondency can negatively affect our ability to make a difference, and build a better tomorrow.

Pessimism reduces both our vision of what is possible, and our ability to change things for the better. It is all around us, and it has an insidious appeal. The media—24-hour television news and the right-leaning press in particular - tend to demonize and oversimplify complex social change. They look for easy - and usually negative - angles on events, and exclude most of what is positive.

The reality, however, is somewhat different. The negative presentation of our global society distorts what is actually happening.

Let me be clear. I am not for one moment suggesting that there are not some extremely sad and distressing things going on in societies all round the world. There are huge challenges facing us as we proceed in the twenty-first century.

What I am saying is that the lens through which we look at things is distorted. Yet the distortion is so pervasive that it threatens to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the next chapter I put forward evidence that because more and more of us want to make a difference, we are approaching a tipping point, at which the people looking to influence things positively will outnumber the negative and inactive members of society.

At this point—or soon afterwards—the pressure of this dominant group in society will start to have significant influence on how corporations, organizations, and governments behave. That influence will be positive, and is likely to combine with another emerging theme—that of citizens, consumers, and employees (the same people wearing different hats) demanding more direct and democratic involvement in major decision making.

Let us first examine some of the origins of our pessimism, and the wounds that it inflicts upon us, so that having identified it, we can overcome it.

POSTMODERNISM AND ALL THAT NONSENSE

Postmodernism has a lot to answer for. The term itself is loose and slippery, and tends to summarize the black mood of despair at the evolution of civilization, which underpins the editorials of many newspapers today. To over-simplify for the sake of brevity, postmodernism is the label (devised initially by some French intellectuals) applied in the later part of the twentieth century to the state of near-chaos which they perceived society had reached.

They argued that the confidence of the Enlightenment (which for the last 200 years or so has discerned an increasing power of reason over ignorance, order over disorder, and science over superstition) was misplaced, and wrong. We, as a society were not evolving at all, and the idea of the progress of civilization was wrong.

They further argued that the underpinnings of the so-called meta-narratives (world views like Christianity, Marxism, Islam, and so on), had fostered a belief that humanity had the capacity to improve its lot, and that this belief was a false one.

Nazism, Stalinism, neo-colonialism, racism, and Third World hunger were adduced as just a few of the reasons that modernism (the progressive evolution of an improving society) was a shattered theory, which, they argued, should therefore be replaced by postmodernism.

Postmodernism is not too clear what it does stand for, but is very clear on what it rejects—that is, any concept of society improving or progressing in any way. Furthermore, postmodernists see individuals as corks tossed on a sea of change, unable to affect outcomes in any meaningful way. Zygmunt Bauman, one of the most trenchant writers on postmodernism, describes its “all-deriding, all-eroding, all-dissolving destructiveness,” pointing out that it “braces itself for a life without truths, standards and ideals.”

Intellectuals exist to challenge the shibboleths of conventional thought, and I’m all for that. Postmodernism, however, has bred a de-energized defeatism that negates responsibility and wallows in its own negativity. Pessimism is a powerful force that attracts people of all ages and backgrounds. It is fashionable, and it is enervating, because, like the feelings of depression it engenders, it develops what Charles Leadbeater, in the excellent and uplifting *Up The Down Escalator*, calls “learned helplessness.” Pessimists become so used to the idea that they are helpless, that they believe it, even when it is not true.

Pessimists learn to see themselves as victims of circumstances that are beyond their control. This helplessness becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, and paralysis of will sets in. The *apparent* crumbling of the major psychological supports (religion, the state, the family) compounds their sense of individual isolation, vulnerability, and inability to cope on their own.

If we want to make a positive difference, we need to unlearn helplessness pretty quickly. To do so, let’s consider some of the facts.

Chapter 2: The good news: the positive difference makers are winning

Two major political changes that have taken place in my lifetime, both of which go directly contrary to the postmodern theory of degeneration and chaos. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of apartheid in South Africa are major world-changing events, both overwhelmingly positive. As a result of the ending of the Cold War, freedom has been given to millions of people who had never known it, and had little expectation of seeing it in their lifetimes.

This is confirmed by research from the World Bank, which indicates that between 1980 and 2000 the number of authoritarian regimes in the world fell from 70 to 30. Freedom House, the global democracy advocate, tells us that in 1980 there were 54 countries which had multiparty elections and some element of formal democracy. These 54 countries accounted for 46 percent of world population. Today, using the same criteria, 121 countries, accounting for over 80 percent of world population, are democratic. Even Africa is improving in terms of democratic accountability. According to the *Economist*, since the end of the Cold War, 18 rulers have already been voted out of office. In the 1960s and 1970s, none had been.

Let's take the UK as an example of what has been happening in the Western world—and latterly in the Asia-Pacific. Since the 1950s, real incomes have risen by 400 percent. The affluence of UK citizens has been augmented by house price rises that have given great swathes of the population access to capital for the first time. We are healthier, live longer—and importantly—live younger. We work in cleaner, safer jobs, which by and large are more interesting and have a lower element of drudgery. We behave and think like people 20 or 30 years younger, had we lived in our parents' generation. We are more mobile (we travel on average 30 miles a day, as against 3 in 1950, not to mention foreign holidays and weekend excursions), we are better educated, and with the Internet, and an active and penetrating media, certainly better informed. We are more self-confident and assertive. We are far more tolerant of, and often welcoming to, diversity of all kinds (which if you belong to a minority group of whatever description is positively life-changing).

The class system is discredited, and for the most part is gasping its last breaths. There are more opportunities for all, and for the young, there are unprecedented chances to travel and see other cultures. The development of lifelong learning means that we have more affordable access to quality teaching of a fantastic range of subjects and crafts. We have choice in financial services. Instead of going on one knee to get a loan that charged usurious rates, we can now pick and choose—and change—at will. We have choice in food shopping. The variety—and low price—of foods in the supermarkets is of a richness and depth that would have staggered us just 20 years ago, let alone 30 or 40. We have a huge choice in media: terrestrial, cable, and satellite television, and a mass of digital radio stations and magazines that cover every taste and interest group you can imagine. Not to mention the Aladdin's cave of choice opening up through mobile telephony.

The willful ignoring of these positive changes by most commentators, and the negative spin put on all changes in our society, are what the Future Foundation, a research organization and consultancy specializing in current and future global trends, call **The Myth of Decline**. They analyze a whole raft of commonly accepted “truths” on the declining standards in society, and demonstrate them to be false. They expose the myths—a tide of rising crime (in fact it’s declining), massive rises in alcohol consumption and drunkenness in Europe (overall it’s static, and has declined 40 percent in France) and so on.

One of the team at Future Foundation, Peter Wilmott, author and family psychologist, puts it this way, “It’s a myth it was better then and a myth it is worse now.” He highlights the so-called decline in the family as a unit, and the decline in family values. In fact, the family is growing in importance as a unit, and as a “psychological lynchpin.”

The so-called “parenting deficit”—today’s busy, two-job, work focused parents devoting less time to their children—is demonstrably untrue. In reality, today’s parents have fewer children, and they are spending an average of 85 minutes per day—per child—concentrating on childcare—a whole lot more than the 25 minutes per day spent in the 1970s. Part of this is due to the parents’ fears (again largely not fact-based) of letting children play on their own in the garden or in the road. On family values the research indicates that, if anything, they are strengthening. The family unit is changing somewhat—some people define their closest friends, along with their children, partners, and parents as close family. The relationships between middle-aged adults (both male and female) and their parents are getting closer (helped by the ubiquity of mobile phones), as are the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. The myth of decline is an international phenomenon. US sociologist Barry Glassner writes in *The Culture of Fear*:

Why are so many fears in the air, and so many of them unfounded? Why, as crime rates plunged throughout the 1990s, did two thirds of Americans think they were soaring? How did it come about that by mid-decade 62 percent of us described ourselves as “truly desperate” about crime—almost twice as many as in the late 1980s when crime rates were higher?

He continues, “Give us a happy ending and we write a new disaster story.”

So the decline in quality of life, and what is called social capital, is largely a myth. Despite that, and the overwhelming positive progress on many fronts, the pessimists do have some legitimate grouses to get upset about. Sadly, being pessimists, they get upset, rather than making any positive contribution to their improvement.

Yes, there is a downside to how our society is evolving. We are searching for moral certainty. It would be helpful to recapture some of the lost notion of piety. The traditional idea of piety was that we should profoundly respect nature, individual human

beings—however weak or unattractive—our history, and the institutions of our community.

Piety comes from the Roman word *pietas*, meaning respect for parents and ancestors, for law and civil order, for the inherited framework of civilized life. The rapid changes in our society are in many ways invigorating, and too much respect can be stultifying and dangerous (look at totalitarian regimes) but an absolute absence of piety is also dangerous. A lack of reverence for people and for nature can lead to a fragile, self-centered society that lacks a moral compass.

This leads people to respect personality—the surface of human beings—rather than character—their inner worth. This in turn leads to the cult of celebrities, rather than heroes. As a result we countenance vulgarity and exhibitionism that continually plumbs new depths. (Now there's a cause for the pessimist newspapers to take some positive action on—a campaign to take celebrities off their pages, and find some heroes instead.)

Another failure of our society—despite some politicians' serious efforts—is to have allowed an underclass to develop. The underclass is too far adrift from the rest of the population in terms of income, education, health, and hope. This is inexcusable, deeply worrying, and needs to be urgently addressed by government.

But we are a very long way from a moral vacuum. Anyone who spends any time around teenagers will know that they have a powerfully developed sense of fairness. Teenagers are on the front line of the moral hotspots—sexism, racism, globalization, and the environment. They work as individuals, and in networked collaboration, to fight for their beliefs, many of which are as least as idealistic and worthwhile as anything fought for in the 1960s.

The point is that action is needed, not moaning. The problem with pessimism is that it builds barricades and fortresses to hide behind, which shut the mind down, and with it, our energy to take action. These barricades and fortresses shelter a comforting, reactionary, delusive view of the past as a place where everyone was nice, white, didn't take drugs, only drank in moderation, was always polite, and lived a happy rural life in a village.

In reality, nowadays most of us live in cities. The multiplicity and diversity of culture—food, theatre, dance—you name it—gives a fantastic richness to our lives, not available behind a barricade. And for those minorities historically marginalized and oppressed—homosexuals, Jews, blacks, women, dissidents and the whole panoply of eccentrics and oddballs—life is full of new promise. In cities, they can be themselves, and have pride in their difference.

People have said to my wife Lizzie and me over the years, “How can you bring up kids in a big city?” The answer is—with great pleasure. The excitement, the energy, the access to some of the best cultural experiences in the world, is a huge privilege for them, and for us.

PESSIMISTS CAN'T HACK IT

This is the essence of it. Encouraged by the media's false picture of the world we live in, pessimists tend to feel helpless, and out of control in an environment that is negative and deteriorating.

They follow the lead of the media they read, and take refuge in complaining. Their negative mindset is the manifestation of the Islamic saying:

A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining soul complains, even if he lives in paradise.

Psychological studies over the years indicate that pessimists tend to achieve less, give up more easily, and get depressed more quickly and more frequently.

Optimists, on the other hand, tend to achieve more at school, in sport, at work, and in life generally. They also tend to live longer, have better health, and recover more quickly from illness. They are more creative, and even if their brain tells them it can't be done, their heart tells them it can.

Landing on the moon, running the mile in four minutes, sailing round the world single-handed, building a business from scratch, setting up a charity to help the underprivileged or the oppressed, helping—in a small or a large way—people who are struggling in life, are all things that need an optimistic outlook to undertake. A pessimist would be unlikely to set out to fight the odds to succeed.

I know from personal experience how disempowering pessimism can be. If I suffer a very brief spell of pessimism, and some obstacle is put in my path to something I am trying to achieve, my immediate reaction is to consider giving up. The energy seeps away, and I feel a powerful sense of inertia taking over. I quickly recover, even more determined to succeed, but the experience of a desire to capitulate, and take the easy, inactive route out, is a powerful one. This underlines the importance of what Stephen Covey, one of the best writers and teachers on personal development, calls the necessity to “carry your own weather around with you.”

Carrying your own weather around with you means having a well-developed and grounded self-esteem that enables you to sustain your own feeling of positive wellbeing through the ups and downs of daily life. Doug Hooper, who worked with life prisoners in some of the toughest gaols in the United States, gives a telling example of what I'm talking about.

He was walking along the pavement one morning with a friend, who stopped to buy a newspaper at a newsstand. There was a short queue, and Hooper was surprised to see how rude and surly the news vendor was to all his customers. When it came to his friend's turn to buy his paper, he saw his friend behaving as his natural, charming and friendly

self, despite the vendor's gratuitous offensiveness. As they walked away, Hooper, astonished, asked his friend why he was so positive and friendly in the face of such boorish behavior. His friend replied, "You don't think I'm going to let a bum like that affect how I feel, do you?"

The fact is that most of us do.

Carrying our own weather around with us is a prerequisite for becoming successful at making a difference. There are plenty of bums around who want to make life smaller and more negative for us. They cannot be allowed to blacken our mood, or diminish our energy level.

MORE OF US ARE IN A POSITION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The consistent rise in affluence over the past 20 or so years in large parts of the globe has meant that most of us are progressing up Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The hierarchy was devised by the psychologist Abraham Maslow some 50 or 60 years ago to explain the evolution and development of human motivation.

His basic argument was that once needs are satisfied they no longer motivate. So you can be extremely thirsty, but once you have found a tap and slaked your thirst, water is no longer very motivating for you.

Published in 1949, it has five steps. The bottom step is physiological needs (hunger, thirst, sex, excretion, and so on); the second is security (self-preservation, safety); the third is social, or belonging (acceptance, membership, team spirit, and so on); the fourth is ego (self-respect, importance, dignity); and the top step is self-actualization (achievement, development, creativity, and helping others).

Interestingly he later developed it further, and changed the top step, by repositioning it as an active state—"self-actualizing"—not a passive state—"self-actualization." The reason for this was that he felt that we never finally arrive at our goal of fulfillment, only reach important stages on a continuous journey.

Self-actualizing means searching for meaning, giving service to others, and generally making a difference in some way for the benefit of humanity. So moving up the hierarchy means developing as a human being, from covering the basic requirements for life, through the need to satisfy our ego (recognition) to the need to help others find their fulfillment.

Some people, of course, never reach the higher levels, and often they can't see why anyone else would want to either. What is interesting, however, is that these people, if they are financially successful in life, often end up being major donors to charities. They are striving to get recognition for being essentially good people (whatever their behavior on the way up), and understand that the only true qualification for being good is to give service to others.

Moving up the higher levels of the hierarchy—and understanding why and how to make a difference—requires personal growth. The phrase “personal growth” is a difficult one, and capable of many definitions.

What I mean by personal growth is the strategic development of our potential as human beings. Crucial in this is the building of a well-grounded self-esteem. It is crucial, because in today’s flatter social structures, where democracy is taking over from command-and-control hierarchies, the ability to cope with personal rejection is an almost daily requirement.

Respect for rank, authority, position, or wealth has dwindled over the years, especially in Western societies. In many ways this has been a good thing, because deference for authority was often built on position, not worth. The bosses and rulers were safe from dissent or criticism, because their position in a rigid hierarchy demanded that what they said was obeyed. Their ability or worth as individuals had little to do with it.

As these command and control systems of social organization evolve into more democratic, egalitarian ones, position is no longer a guarantee of authority. Decisions of leaders are questioned, and if found wanting, are ignored or disobeyed.

What this means is that no one is safe. Those in authority can be told they have feet of clay, or to take a jump. Managers, schoolteachers, politicians, police officers, religious leaders, all have to expect to cope with rejection in one form or another. Those who can retain their humanity, warmth, composure, and good humor while establishing their authority deservedly become respected leaders. They build respect with the people they are dealing with, as well as building their own self-esteem.

The personal development required to achieve this authority and ability to lead others is a subject I will address in more depth later. For the present, suffice it to say that Maslow put his finger on the heart of it, when he said, “Every day we have a thousand choices, between safety and growth.” As we make our unsteady way up the hierarchy of needs, we take one step forwards, and sometimes two steps back. Growth means getting out of our comfort zone, taking risks, and trying to cope with new challenges to our sense of self. Safety means taking no risks, continuing to believe our own propaganda about ourselves, and not knowing if we could have coped, had we put our heads over the parapet.

Figures on the speed at which we as a society are moving up Maslow’s hierarchy are hard to come by. We all have anecdotal evidence of the significant growth in search for justice, fairness, significance, the desire to make a difference, which make up the higher levels of the hierarchy. A recent study by the retail arm of a large management consultancy showed that high up in the scores for what shoppers were looking for in the shopping experience was “meaning.” By this they meant that the perceived values of the retailers they chose to shop in chimed with their own sense of what was right, fair, and just. Ten years ago

meaning wouldn't even have been on the radar screen, let alone in the beam of the headlights.

One small numerical handle we have on it is through another version of Maslow's hierarchy, developed by commercial consultancies. This is a three-level hierarchy, dividing the population by values and behavior into Sustenance Driven/ Survivors, Outer Directeds, and Inner Directeds. The first group is self-explanatory. The Outer Directeds are motivated by conspicuous consumption and status. They gain their self-esteem from what other people think of them. It is important to them what car they drive, what job they have, and whether their kids think they are cool or not.

The Inner Directeds (the equivalent of the Self-Actualizers) are more experimental, and are concerned by social values, and making a difference. They include older idealists, and younger groups active in social and political causes. What they feel about things is what is important, not what other people think. To oversimplify, Outer Directeds are worried about what the boss thinks of what they are doing, whereas the Inner Directeds are worried about what future generations will think of what they are doing.

In a 1998 study by Synergy Consulting, the percentage of Inner Directeds was put at 25 percent of the population. A forecast by Kinsman, looking at the split in 2020, puts the percentage at 40–50 percent. Even if the Kinsman forecast of 40–50 percent of our society being inner-values driven is on the high side, which it may be, the thought that getting on for half the population by 2020 could be looking to help others, and to make a difference, is both exciting and uplifting. Not only does it bode well for how business and governments will need to behave, it could be a significant positive step for the future of the planet.

So there are many reasons to be optimistic about the evolving economic and social context. There are plenty of challenges too, but challenges are food and drink to the person wanting to make a difference. In a confusing and uncertain world we are looking for leadership and guidance, but at the same time we are becoming far clearer in our thinking about what principles and values will underpin that current and future world.

Difference Drivers and Difference Deliverers, with their optimism and sense of purpose, will be well equipped to play an important role in defining those principles and providing that leadership. There is more and growing evidence that this is already happening. Not only are some of the corrupt and violent forces receding (apartheid and the dehumanizing grimness of communist ideologies), they are beginning to be replaced by the forces of enlightenment and human dignity.

Political correctness is such a force. It is much mocked, but it has delivered huge benefits to those whose protection it sought to provide. It has restored human dignity to minorities whose ethnic, religious, or sexual orientation used to be the constant butt of humor or abuse. Irish jokes, Polish jokes, Belgian jokes—or whoever was the neighboring

country chosen to be parodied as being stupid, greedy, or tight-fisted— are much reduced in many societies.

THE GROWTH AND EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERING

A mounting body of research into social beliefs and behaviors is showing important changes in our aspirations. These changes are fundamental, and would have been hard to predict just 10 or 20 years ago.

What is interesting—and significant—is that intangible, rather than tangible, aspirations are now becoming huge drivers of behavior. Rather than a larger house, a bigger car, or a bigger pay packet, the biggest motivator now is personal fulfillment. It's no longer what you own, but what you *do*—together with family, friends, or in the community— that is important. This desire for fulfillment, coupled with *how* you live your life, starts to put the wish to make a difference—to positively impact on events and people— more and more center stage.

This is manifesting itself in the increase in volunteering. When Margaret Thatcher pronounced society dead in the 1980s, it seemed that the deeply unattractive, financially dominated, “me first and the devil take the hindmost” attitudes she seemed to promulgate and encourage were set to take over as the norms in UK society. Fortunately, it has turned out very differently. The growth in volunteering has been exciting and significant for some years now. By 2003 *The Citizenship Survey* from the UK government shows 17 million people in England and Wales taking part in some sort of volunteering activity. This was 1.7 million higher than the previous level in 2001. As a proportion of the active population, the percentage of people active in their communities rose from 48 percent in 2001 to 51 percent in 2003. Within this figure, the most exciting growth was in those participating at least once a month— the regular volunteers, who are serious about doing something to make a difference.

So whatever the pessimists may be saying about society falling apart, over half the population aren't listening to their siren voices, and allowing fragmentation to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. They are getting off their backsides, and doing something to make a difference.

The whole volunteering movement has been greatly encouraged by businesses, which see local communities as important stakeholders (the source of both employees, and to a lesser extent, customers). Recognizing their responsibility to the communities they operate in, and the need to be attractive to current and potential staff, many businesses run match time schemes.

These schemes allow employees to claim up to 40 hours of paid time to do voluntary work. Some companies, like Timberland (the footwear company) even include active engagement in the community in their personal and management development schemes. They find it a two-way win. The employees benefit from and enjoy the engagement in

helping the community, and the firm benefits from more motivated, energetic staff, and strong team building amongst those taking part.

This felicitous interconnectedness between business and its wider stakeholders in the community could be supercharged once more metrics are developed to quantify the benefits of such activity. Measurable benefits might include increases in staff retention, increased staff morale, decrease in formal training costs, more effective team working, the cross-fertilization of ideas, and new approaches to innovation.

Evidence is also emerging that volunteering keeps you young. Numerous studies confirm that volunteering into old age enhances both physical and psychological health, and lowers rates of depression and mortality.

Yes, making a difference for other people actually makes you happier, and not only that, you live longer.

Interestingly, a recent study by nfpSynergy, a think tank and consultancy in the area of not-for-profit activity, entitled *The 21st Century Volunteer* has revealed a halt in the growth of volunteering, after several years of continuous growth, with some evidence of a small reversal of the trend. Their research reveals compelling reasons for this change in the trend. The major reason they identify is that volunteers tend to be better educated, more discriminating, and more demanding. In all areas of their life they have huge choice as to how they allocate their scarce time resources. They are therefore demanding more time flexibility from charities, and more relevant and meaningful work. Currently, charities are very slow to respond with more intelligent and sensitive matching of needs to skills. A person skilled in information technology is still being handed a paintbrush, or a bin liner to collect litter. Nowadays people want appropriate training, support and recognition, relevant work, and even a say in how operations are run.

Sadly, an effective delivery mechanism for matching an individual volunteer's potential contribution to needs is still some way off. The good news is that charities are beginning to appreciate the need, and the potential. The challenge is for charities to make their volunteer development and management as professional and effective as their fundraising development and management.

More important though, is that the whole perception of volunteering is changing. What previously was perceived as social obligation is now seen as a means for the individual volunteering to find self-fulfillment in helping others. The old Victorian paradigm of stern duty—the burden the wealthy middle classes must take up to help the less fortunate (poor) members of society—has been transformed. Volunteering is now about unleashing the personal potential of people at all levels in society. The benefits are now two-way—to the helper and the helped.

A powerful parallel of this mutual benefiting is my own experience in the London Marathon. I was lucky enough to run in the first four London Marathons. It was an

uplifting and moving experience. Apart from the obvious discomfort and challenge of having to run such a very long way, the support of the crowd was energizing and moving to a degree impossible to communicate to someone who has not experienced it personally.

The route was lined by people cheering us on—often with wit, as well as encouragement (I remember one old lady, as our legs wilted towards the end, shouting “Don’t worry dears, there’s dancing at the end!”). The impact on the human spirit of all the runners was awesome. Time and again when the body and the mind were flagging, our courage and determination was restored by the cheers and encouragement of the crowd, many of whom had been standing there for two or three hours continuously cheering people on.

In subsequent years, my marathon career in suspension, I went with my family to support the runners. I was amazed to find it a very emotional and uplifting experience, almost more so than taking part. You felt that every runner you encouraged took strength from the exchange, and carried on fortified. The encouragement genuinely made a difference (as it had to me and my friends in earlier years).

The point is, as with volunteering, I was getting a big lift from helping others. In no way did I feel what was probably at the back of my mind when I first went to support those taking part—that I was doing the honorable thing in helping the runners, because I in turn had been helped. Rather than being noble, and repaying my dues, I found huge satisfaction and fulfillment in taking part in a reciprocal experience that benefited all parties. And it would have been just as fulfilling if I had never run a marathon in my life.

This fulfillment is manifest not just in a sense of spiritual fulfillment. Research amongst over 600 Community Service Volunteers (the organization is the UK’s largest volunteering and training organization, with an interesting website, www.csv.org.uk) showed that there are direct physical and mental health benefits in volunteering. Not only is volunteers’ mental health better, they take less sick days, and even enjoy noticeable weight loss. (Apart from the weight loss, this is remarkably similar to the positive health attributes mentioned earlier of optimists against pessimists.)

So the positive difference makers seem to be slowly building their numbers and their strength in our society. The next step is to explore how they can be helped to be more effective...

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